



The Johnson Letter

From the desk of
Michigan State Senator

Shirley Johnson

P.O. Box 30036 Lansing, MI 48909

Toll-free at (877) SEN-13TH



Dear Friend:

As you know, I have always made education one of my top priorities. Whether it was a funding increase or legislation that made the bus ride to school safer, I have been dedicated to improving our schools and giving Michigan students a quality education.

My colleagues and I in the Senate have recently taken great measures to ensure that all Michigan students are receiving an education that will prepare them for the jobs of the future. Senate Bill (SB) 1124 would require all students to pass a number of mandatory classes before being able to graduate. This legislation would make Michigan a national leader in having rigorous high school graduation requirements.

To prepare for this legislation the Senate Education Committee held nine hearings across the state to seek input from parents, educators, and others. After careful consideration, the requirements included four credits of English, four credits of math, three credits of science, an online learning experience and more.

As Michigan's economy continues to lose manufacturing jobs, it is increasingly evident that the jobs of the future will require more education and an emphasis on math and science. Every student should be afforded the opportunity to excel in these areas in order to compete for jobs in the global economy, and I will continue to work to ensure that this is the case.

Sincerely,

Shirley Johnson



Inside this issue:

Detroit Water
Department
Reform Bills
Approved

2

Senate and House
Pass Minimum
Wage Bill

2

Senators Hear
Details on Bills to
Protect Children
from Sexual Preda-
tors

2

Spotlight on State
Representative
Shelley Taub

3

Lifeline Telephone
Discount Program
Expanded

3

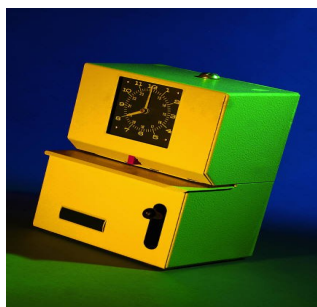
Detroit Water Department Reform Bills Approved

Senate Bill 372 is on its way to the governor's desk, marking the second attempt to bring accountability to the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department for suburban constituents. In March 2003, the governor vetoed similar legislation to create an oversight board to review the department's financial dealings. The legal concerns raised by the governor in her

veto message of that legislation are addressed and corrected in Senate Bill 372, which recently passed the Michigan House of Representatives. The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department has been plagued for more than three decades by problems involving substantial wholesale rate increases, delinquent accounts, water main breaks, security lapses, contracting

irregularities and other questionable practices. Since 1996, wholesale water rates charged by DWSD to its suburban customers have increased by more than 93 percent. This is more than three-and-a-half times the rate of inflation in the same period.

Minimum Wage Legislation Passed by House and Senate



The Michigan legislature, spurred by the Republican majority in the Senate, recently passed an increase in the state's minimum wage law. The vote received unanimous support in the Senate. The bill would raise the minimum wage to \$6.95 per hour on Oct. 1, 2006. It provides for an increase to \$7.15 on July 1, 2007 and \$7.40 on July 1, 2008. Michigan's minimum wage has

not been increased in nine years and the Senate-passed proposal is actually higher than the increase being put forth by those advocating annual, mandatory minimum wage increases written into Michigan's constitution. The bill does not include the annual escalator in the wage supported by the sponsors of the constitutional amendment.

Senators Hear Details on Bills to Protect Children from Sexual Predators

Testimony was heard recently in the Senate Judiciary Committee on legislation designed to give judges and law enforcement officials a powerful new weapon to protect children from sexual predators. The legislation will give prosecutors the ability to charge and judges the option of sentencing individuals convicted of sex with children to life in prison with no chance of pa-

role. If signed into law, Senate Bill 709, along with two companion bills, will make it possible for an individual convicted of criminal sexual conduct in the first degree to serve a life sentence without a chance of parole if their victim was under the age of 13. The proposal also requires one of the following circumstances be present: infliction of injury, use of a weapon, force or coer-

cion, or the perpetrator held a position of authority.



Michigan Manual Copies for Sale

The Michigan Legislative Council and the Legislative Service Bureau are pleased to announce the publication of the 2005-2006 Michigan Manual. This state government yearbook, which was first produced in 1836, provides a wealth of information on the operations of each of the three branches of Michigan government. It presents a wide range of materials, encompassing historical information, biographies of

elected officials, profiles of the state universities, primary and general election results, county officers, census data, and proposed constitutional amendments. Sometimes referred to as the "Red Book," the Michigan Manual profiles state agencies and many of the processes through which the people of this state govern themselves.

Copies of the Michigan Manual are for

sale for \$25.00 each, and may be ordered through the Legislative Service Bureau Business Office, P.O. Box 30036, Lansing, MI 48909-7536. Prepayment is required, along with a completed copy of a Bureau publication order form.



Spotlight On State Representative Shelley Taub



Representative Shelley Taub (R-Bloomfield Hills) has recently introduced legislation which would help senior citizens avoid the huge jump in property taxes for those who want to move out of their family home and move into a smaller home. This legislation would provide an exemption under proposal A to allow seniors, 65 years or older, to purchase a home, with a State Equalized

Value (SEV) that is less than the SEV of their current principal residence and hold the property taxes at the current level. The taxable value would remain the same as it was under the previous owner. This change would allow senior citizens to buy a smaller home or a condo without being hit by the change in assessment that substantially increases property taxes for the new owner.

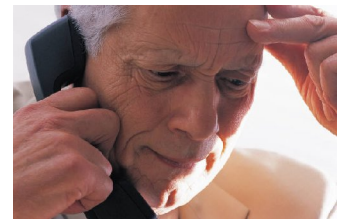
Lifeline Telephone Discount Program Expanded

Did you know that you might be eligible to receive discounted telephone service? Recent changes to the Lifeline telephone assistance program mean that more Michigan residents can now take advantage of this program offered through local telephone companies. The Lifeline telephone assistance program helps to make basic telephone service and installation affordable for low-income families and residents throughout the state. Residents who are at 150% or below of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or who participate in one of the following programs are eligible to apply:

- Medicaid
- Food Stamps
- Supplemental Security Income
- Federal Public Housing Assistance

- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families,
- the National School Lunch Programs' Free Lunch Program

On average, those who qualify for lifeline save \$100 off their annual telephone bill and up to 50% off their local telephone installation charge. For more information on the program or to enroll, please contact your local telephone service provider.



Questions or Comments?

Contact Senator Shirley Johnson

Toll-Free at 1-877-SEN13TH (736-1384)

SenSJohnson@senate.michigan.gov

Please Note: The Johnson Letter is published monthly, for all interested readers, by the Office of State Senator Shirley Johnson. To be removed or added permanently to our mailing list, please contact our office.